

my reply to Mr. Lawrence respecting divorce; No. 3, my reply to Mr. Lawrence respecting liquor law; No. 4, my reply respecting alleged breach of liquor law at Aitutaki; No. 5, my reply respecting alleged export of liquor to Humphrey's Islands (Manihiki), and to Penrhyn.

I also enclose No. 6, copy of a semi-official note received by me on the 4th from Mr. Lawrence, in which that gentleman states that he will resume the correspondence after the departure of the mail, and that he sees nothing in my replies to make him believe that his information is incorrect. I therefore await the reply, but entertain a different opinion to Mr. Lawrence, and fear that he has been, on many important points, much misled.

I may state, for your Excellency's further information, that the import of spirits into Rarotonga during the eighteen months in which the Government has been in operation, and for which statistics are therefore available, has been: For September quarter, 1891, £55; December quarter, 1891, £46; March quarter, 1892, £30; June quarter, 1892, £117; September quarter, 1892, £57; December quarter, 1892, £115.

In the early part of 1891 a proportionately large quantity of spirits remained in hand from the free imports for sale among the Natives before the present law came into operation. At the present time there is in hand a considerable proportion of the import for the December quarter, 1892.

The importation of wine and beer is insignificant, being £24 and £135 respectively for the year 1892.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS,
British Resident.

His Excellency the Earl of Glasgow, G.C.M.G., &c.

Enclosure No. 1.

SIR,—

Mission House, Rarotonga, 31st January, 1893.

It is my painful duty to have to lay before you a formal complaint—a protest concerning the conduct of Tepou-o-te-Rangi, District Judge of Avarua, and Judge of the Supreme Court of the Cook Group Federation. The ground of my complaint is that he took it upon himself, either acting in his capacity as District Judge of Avarua or Judge of the Supreme Court, to grant divorce to a large number of people, some of whom are natives of Rarotonga, others are natives of Mangaia and Aitutaki, and two foreigners resident in Avarua, a white man and a Chinaman. I would point out that when these divorces were granted the divorce law passed by the Rarotonga Council was not in force; also, that, according to the custom of this island and the other islands of the group, it was not the province of the District Judges to grant divorces; therefore the conduct of Tepou-o-te-Rangi, in granting divorces to these people, is, in my opinion, altogether illegal and arbitrary. I have further to complain that, when the Native teachers in connection with the London Missionary Society refused to remarry people so divorced, on the ground that these divorces were illegal, Tepou-o-te-Rangi arbitrarily and illegally married people so divorced by himself.

In my opinion this conduct of the District and Supreme Court Judge has struck a blow at the sacred institution of marriage in this island the effect of which will be lasting for evil, unless something be done at once. I would particularly call your attention to the fact that divorce was granted to people from Aitutaki and Mangaia even after these islands had declared emphatically, by the vote of their representatives in the Federal Parliament, that they did not wish for a divorce law. Nor were any of these cases of such a nature as the law of England, Scotland, or any of the colonies would recognise as cases in which a Divorce Court might grant relief.

I take, as an example of a case of this kind, that of Joe, a native of Aitutaki, married to an Aitutaki woman, with whom he lived for a number of years. Divorce was not granted in this case as relief to an injured husband, as might be supposed. I knew this man's wife intimately for five years; she was a church member, and a teacher in my school; there was not the slightest fault to be found with her moral character during the five years I knew her. The husband, on the other hand, neglected his wife more or less. On what grounds could this man obtain a decree of divorce? On no ground whatever but that of his own infidelity, and that he was tired of his wife. To give divorce on these grounds is, in my opinion, contrary to both the law of God and man. From inquiries I have made, I find that this conduct of her husband in securing divorce and remarrying has had the result of driving this woman to evil ways. Not only in Avarua, but in Ngatangia have divorces of the same kind been granted by the District Judge of that settlement, or by some who signs himself Ngatamariki, Parliament. I presume this gentleman is the member of Parliament for this district. I therefore call upon you, as there is no Court in which the question of the legality or illegality of these decrees can be decided, to say whether divorces granted under these circumstances are legal; and further, if legal, are persons remarried by the District Judge of Avarua or by that of Ngatangia, legally married? It may be that in their own districts these Judges may be held to have acted legally; if so, will you say whether they acted legally in dealing with cases from other islands of the group?

I have further to call your attention to the conduct of the Native authorities concerning the liquor law of the Island of Rarotonga. As I understand the law, any Native desiring to buy spirituous or fermented liquor must first obtain a permit for the same from the Queen, or Chief of the district of the island in which he resides.

This law at first acted as a salutary check on the drinking habits of the people, as the authorities were chary of granting permits, being well convinced of the evils resulting to their people. In some evil moment the authorities hit upon the idea of charging a fee of 20c. for each permit, and since they began doing so the amount of liquor consumed by the natives of this island has been steadily increasing; and if the permit system is not put on a more satisfactory footing the last state of Rarotonga will be worse than the first. This fee could not have been placed as a check upon the sale of liquors, because the authorities have unlimited power, and their refusal to issue permits was the check relied upon to control the traffic among the Native population. In my opinion the